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Ideas, Interests and Policy Change *

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One of the central themes of Lindblom's work is the role of knowledge and ideas in social problem-solving. In The Intelligence of Democracy he criticized the "clumsy realism" of pluralists like Bentley who dismiss the power of ideas and argue "as though minds were among the most trivial resources available to the group" (Lindblom, 1965:16). In his latest book Lindblom reaffirms his belief that "people have, for all their cognitive shortcomings, no better resources [than intelligence and information] even when their intelligence sometimes leads them to forswear certain lines of inquiry" (Lindblom, 1990:2). For many public problems, no solutions can be found unless people are willing to accept new ways of thinking and new and broader concepts of the public interest. Hence the crucial importance of persuasion in all social systems and the centrality of two-way discussion to democracy (Lindblom, 1977: 52-54).

At the same time, Lindblom rejects the rationalist fallacy of believing that theories and ideas alone are powerful enough to determine the course of events, and of interpreting policy-making as a purely intellectual exercise. Indeed, some of his best-known contributions to the study of policy-making -- the critique of synoptic conceptions of problem solving, the defense of incrementalism and interactive problem solving as alternatives to formal policy analysis, the emphasis on the inability of social science to provide an authoritative basis for policy decisions -- are directed against old and new utopias of a scientifically guided society (Lindblom, 1990: 213-230).

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Between the two extremes of a clumsy realism which holds that ideas only reflect interests or legitimize power, and the notion that ideas, not vested interests drive policy outcomes many different positions can be reasonably defended. Especially in his most recent writings, Lindblom has chosen to emphasize power rather than intelligence, the limitations rather than the accomplishments of the natural and social sciences, the social and cultural impairment of citizens rather than their ability, recently demonstrated in Eastern Europe, to bring about spectacular changes in policies and institutions. Other authors are much more sanguine about the political power of ideas. It is not the purpose of this paper to review the arguments presented by pessimists and optimists. Rather, I shall argue that the interaction between ideas, interests and policy change is much more complex than it is usually assumed by both schools of thought, and suggest ways in which the order of ideas and the order of events may be fitted together to provide a fuller picture of policy development. Ideas and interests are not polar concepts. Ideas are related to interests since they are normally produced with some purpose in mind and also because, as Max Weber emphasized, ideas are powerless in history unless they are fused with material interests. Conversely, interests are related to ideas since the pursuit of interests requires intellectual operations like the specification of feasible goals, the selection of appropriate means and, especially in public life, the justification of both goals and means.

Rather than a polarity, ideas and interests represent two analytic perspectives -- different but complementary. To choose one is not to reject the other (Lepsius, 1986). Both perspectives, Weber reminds us in the concluding sentences of the Protestant Ethic, are possible.

Reasons and Causes

Unfortunately, not many students of public policy have followed Max Weber's suggestion. Pluralists, neo-corporatists and public-choice theorists alike, have attempted to explain policy change as the result of changes in the configuration of dominant interests, or in economics and technology, to the exclusion of intellectual factors -- reasons, ideas, justifications. However, a number of recent studies dealing with such important examples of policy change as the adoption of keynesian policies in Europe and America, the monetarist and supply-side counter-revolutions of the 1980s, the rise of environmentalism, and the diffusion of the deregulation and privatization movements, provide evidence that an adequate model of policy making must include, in addition to interests and other "causal" factors, also ideas and arguments, in short, "reasons".

According to Peter Temin, for example, the process of deregulation of long-distance telecommunications in the United States "was dominated by changing ideology, not changing technology. It was ideas, not things, that urged on the actors at critical points in the contest over telecommunications policy and AT&T's organization" (Temin, 1987:7). Similarly, the fundamental redirection of British public policy effected by the Conservative governments has been deeply influenced, if not dominated, by a mix of Austrian and neo-classical market theories and of libertarian values (Helm, 1989).

It is even possible that, at least in some cases, the influence of special interests and the public consequences of the privileged position of business (Lindblom, 1977: 170-188), have been exaggerated. Thus, according to the theories of "regulatory capture" popular in the 1960s and 1970s, regulated firms influence the outcome of the regulatory process by providing financial or other support to politicians and regulators who are presumed to be self-interested maximizers. Yet, summarizing the evidence provided by a series of case studies of U.S. regulatory agencies, James Q.Wilson concludes that "only by the most extraordinary theoretical contortions can one explain the Auto Safety Act, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the OSH Act, or most environmental protection laws by reference to the economic stakes involved" (Wilson, 1980: 372). Even in the case of economic regulation -- the case usually considered by the capture theory of regulation -- it would be difficult to see the regulation of the gas industry in America, say, as being motivated by pressures of producers whose best interests lay in allowing prices to rise to market clearing levels. The industry also opposed the extension of control to wellhead prices. Here, as in the case of social regulation or antitrust policy, public interest considerations seem to have been uppermost, even if the system of regulation of gas prices proved to be inept (Swann, 1988; Vietor, 1984).

Again, in none of the cases of deregulation studied by Derthick and Quirk did the regulated industries decide that regulation was no longer in their interest; nor was the defeat of the regulated industries brought about primarily by other well-organized groups that stood to gain from reform. Instead, these authors argue that the regulatory reforms of the late 1970s and early 1980s would never have occurred without the sustained intellectual critique of previous regulatory policies developed by economists in the preceding decade (Derthick and Quirk, 1985: 238-46).

These examples demonstrate the importance of analyzing policy change both from the perspective of interests and from that of ideas. In fact, the examples show that the crucial conceptual difficulty about policy change is precisely to explain the relationship between, and to clarify the respective roles of, ideas and interests. However, this difficulty is not peculiar to our field of study. A similar problem has been discussed by philosophers with reference to the general issue of conceptual change and it may be heuristically useful to follow the philosophers in their more abstract analysis of different patterns of explanation.

According to Stephen Toulmin (1972: 222-23; 308-13), when we ask why a particular conceptual innovation succeeded in winning a place in a scientific discipline, two alternative interpretations of that "why" present themselves. We may be asking what rational considerations were advanced by the scientists concerned, to justify accepting that particular conceptual change. On this interpretation, the "why" is a request for reasons, and the reply must be given in intellectual, disciplinary terms, internal to the science itself. However, this first interpretation takes it for granted that the change was made "for reasons" at all. In fact, the history of science shows that a concept (like the quaternion in mathematics or Cartesian push in physics) can drop out of the reportory of a discipline, without the scientists concerned taking any deliberate decision to make this change. In extreme cases, the change may be forced upon the scientists by political authorities, as when education and research in standard genetics were virtually outlawed in the Soviet Union. The question now becomes one, not about justificatory reasons but about causal factors (personal ambitions, intellectual fashions, political or economic pressures) influencing or determining a given conceptual change. Lakatos' distinction between internal and external history serves the same analytic purpose of defining two complementary perspectives in the study of scientific development. Internal-disciplinary history must be supplemented by empirical-external history: "Rational reconstruction of science ... cannot be comprehensive since human beings are not completely rational animals; and even when they act rationally they may have a false theory of their own rational actions" (Lakatos, 1971: 102). However, for Lakatos rational reconstruction or internal history is primary, external history only secondary, since the most important problems of external history are defined by internal history (ib.: 105).

Toulmin is interested not only in the growth of scientific knowledge, but also in the organization and evolution of intellectual professions like law, medicine or architecture. Hence, for him, neither perspective can be totally prior, or subordinate, to the other. Whereas rational (internal) accounts of scientific change are concerned primarily with the outcome, i.e., achieved scientific knowledge, causal (external) accounts are preoccupied with the process of knowledge formation. Thus, "[w]e may .. view a collective intellectual enterprise, either as a network of causal processes or, alternatively, as a field for rational achievement. These two viewpoints are alternatives, rather than competitors, and we may move from the one to the other by an appropriate switch of interpretation. If the two resulting types of history overlap in practice, that is because both interpretations are built into the life of the rational enterprise itself" (Toulmin, 1972: 312).

Politics and Policy

Policy making can hardly be considered a rational enterprise. Nevertheless, the philosophical analysis of "reasons" and "causes" suggests ways of giving a sharper meaning to the distinction between politics and policy -- a distinction ignored by many languages and which has become increasingly blurred in contemporary political science. I believe that Lindblom's writings on policy making -- especially his views on incrementalism and on social interaction as a mode of problem solving -- have significantly contributed to this blurring. Indeed, if policy emerges, more or less epiphenomenally, from a series of incremental adjustments or from a network of social interactions, it is tempting to conclude that the process is the outcome, or at least that no sharp line can be drawn between the two. The emphasis of much contemporary research on the politics of policy, i.e., on causal explanations of policy change with little or no attention given to policy content, leads to similar conclusions.

The policy-making view of politics has produced important new insights into the functioning of different political systems. However, this body of literature has contributed much less to our understanding of the substantive implications of policy change, and hence to our ability to evaluate it. A practical consequence of blurring the distinction between process (politics) and outcome (policy) is that acceptability becomes the main normative criterion: a policy is good if it is acceptable to all or most of the relevant actors. This convenient criterion is particularly congenial to a neocorporatist mode of analysis. Its main limitation, however, is that it does not take into account the social costs and deadweight losses caused by popular, but substantively incorrect, policies.

Normatively unhelpful, purely causal explanations of policy change can also give a distorted view of the process itself. As John Kingdon (1984: 131-32) has written: "The content of the ideas themselves, far from being mere smokescreen or rationalizations, are integral parts of decision making in and around government. As officials and those close to them encounter ideas and proposals, they evaluate them, argue with one another, marshal evidence and argument in support or opposition, persuade one another, solve intellectual puzzles, and become entrapped in intellectual dilemmas.... Governmental officials often judge the merits of a case as well as its political costs and benefits".

Even when policy change is best explained by the political and economic power of groups seeking selfish ends, those who attempt to justify those changes must appeal to the merit of particular issues. Legislators, administrators, analysts, media experts and the public at large wish to know whether the change is justified. All of them seek standards against which to judge the success of a policy and the merits of specific programs initiated within the framework of that policy (Majone, 1989a: 149).

As noted above, a number of recent studies of policy change reject purely causal explanations, suggesting instead that an adequate model must also include ideas and institutions. This new literature reflects a growing realization that what used to be called the superstructure has a considerable degree of autonomy with respect to shifting constellations of power and interests in society. In fact, the strong continuities in national patterns of economic and social policy revealed by those studies are hardly compatible with the "image of a state as a kind of billiard ball, pushed around by competing interest groups" (Hall, 1986: 17).

These suggestions have been developed into analytic models of policy change encompassing three distinct and relatively autonomous, but interrelated, levels: the policy space, the actor space ("politics"), and the problem space (Kingdon, 1984; Majone 1989a, 1991). The policy space includes not only actual policies and their institutional embodiments, but also ideas, conceptualizations and proposals advanced by policy actors, academic and bureaucratic experts, interest-group representatives, and so on. "Causal" studies of policy making view the policy space (or part of it) as the dependent variable, the actor space as the independent variable. In the newer models, both variables influence each other. For example, Lowi's dictum "policies determine politics" is interpreted to mean that the structural characteristics of the policy space affect the structure of the actor space, say, the kinds of coalitions that can be put together or the degree of fragmentation of the "policy community" -- politicians, citizens and experts who share an active interest in a given policy area. Conversely, and more intuitively, characteristics of the actor space (e.g., electoral system, form of government, etc.) influence policy outcomes.

Like the policy and the actor space, the problem space, too, can be analyzed in terms of various structural characteristics. These characteristics are important determinants of the way in which policy actors perceive and handle different issues. An interesting early example of structural analysis of a problem space can be found in Hirschman's <u>Journeys Toward Progress</u>

(1963), where the author contrasts the characteristic features of the inflation problem studied in Chile with those of regional underdevelopment (in Brazil) and maldistribution of land (in Columbia). In contrast to maldistribution of land, inflation sends out regular signals, is measurable, and is therefore apt to get special attention from analysts and policy makers as soon as it passes some threshold of tolerance. Also, in contrast to natural calamities like periodic droughts, inflation is viewed as a man-made calamity and hence lends itself to recrimination among social groups. Unlike regional underdevelopment, inflation is formally rather similar from country to country. It has to do with the highly technical subject of money. Hence dominant economic doctrines and international experts play particularly important roles in attempts at solution, although both experts and doctrines are also apt to play highly political roles (Hirschman, 1963, 1981).

A detailed structural analysis of the kind exemplified by Hirschman is beyond the scope of this paper (but see Majone, 1989a: 150-61). Rather, in the remaining pages, I intend to emphasize two points already mentioned, but which are often overlooked in discussions about the role of knowledge and ideas in policy making: first, that the relationship between problems, actors, policies and institutions is dialectic rather than monocausal or unidirectional; and, second, that ideas and theories are used not only to discover new solutions, but also to make sense of what has already happened.

The Contribution of Social Science

Both points are essential for a correct understanding of the role of social science in policy making. Even recent literature stressing the importance of ideas as sources of policy change often fails to recognize that the traffic in knowledge between social scientists and the state is a two-way one. For example, the model of the policy process implicit in several analyses of the diffusion of keynesian ideas privileges the role of professional economists and stresses the impact of expert advice on policy (Hall, 1989: 8). In such a model, the production of knowledge is viewed as an abstract activity taking place in some sphere quite detached from the policy process.

This artificial separation between producers and users of ideas not only misses the point that social scientific knowledge is only one of many conceptual inputs to policy making (Lindblom and Cohen, 1979; Lindblom, 1990), but inevitably leads to a systematic discounting of ideas as merely instrumental.

The inadequacy of a unidirectional view of the role of knowledge in policy making can be shown by comparing the traditional accounts of the conflict between Keynes and the British Treasury in the interwar period with the conclusions of recent research based on official documents not previously available to scholars.

Whereas the older accounts ascribed the rejection of the 1929 Liberal public works program, not to the technical and political deficiencies of the program but, as Peter Clarke puts it, to "know-nothing administrative reductionism", now it is recognized that "the Treasury model of the 1920s has immense strengths, intellectual strengths not least" (Clarke, 1990: 206). This model was not just a theoretical exercise, but included a wide range of technical, administrative and political constraints which Keynes and other Liberal economists had largely ignored (Middleton, 1985; Peden, 1984). Above all, "Treasury officials had long understood that most politicians have a natural propensity to spend money in ways that will win votes. This is why they had developed restrictive rules of public finance in the nineteenth century and why they were still trying to apply such rules in the mid-twentieth century" (Peden, 1990: 237-38).

Eventually, under the influence of Keynes but especially of the unprecedented consequences of the great depression, the Treasury had to modify its views. In the process of adjustment "government may have learned from economists -- but as much about the limitations of pure theory as anything else. The practical wisdom of an administrator like Hopkins was ... a revelation to an economist like Henderson, and perhaps a salutary lesson to Keynes himself. Who learned most from whom is a question worth pondering" (Clarke, 1990: 206). Also the nature of the keynesian revolution, where it succeeded, has been widely misunderstood. According to the older literature, President Franklin D.Roosevelt's policy of increased government spending to reduce unemployment and get out of the depression was inspired by the new theories of Keynes. But Roosevelt did not have to learn about government spending from Keynes. The idea that the influence of the British economist lay behind the policy of the New Deal began to take root fairly early, but it is only a legend (Winch, 1969: 219-22). The theories of Keynes merely provided a sophisticated rationale for what Roosevelt was doing anyway. The answers that these theories provided to questions about the causes of long-term unemployment and the reasons for the effectiveness of public spending were not prerequisites for Roosevelt's expansionist fiscal policy. But as these answers came to dominate the thinking of economists and politicians, they helped to make expansionist fiscal policy the core idea of liberal economic policy for several decades. In the words of a former chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, "[w]ithout Keynes, and especially without the interpretation of Keynes by his followers, expansionist fiscal policy might have remained an occasional emergency measure and not become a way of life" (Stein, 1984: 39).

That keynesian theories did not initiate a new policy of deficit spending, but provided a sophisticated rationale for what governments had been doing for a long time, seems surprising only if one clings to old-fashioned positivistic views. In fact, the role of social scientific theory is less to provide ready-made solutions than alternative ways of making sense of some set of actions. To paraphrase Karl Weick, social theory makes sense of what has been, not what will be. It is a process of justification in which past deeds are made to appear sensible to the actor innovations in S.P.

himself or to those other persons to whom he feels accountable (Weick, 1969: 38).

Thus, the Sherman and Clayton Acts establishing for the first time an American antitrust policy were not influenced by the economic theory of monopoly, then in its infancy. Rather, the present sophistication of antitrust economics in the United States owes a good deal to the early development of antitrust law, and to the consequent growth of a market in economists, whether as expert witnesses or as policy analysts (Hannah, 1990: 375). But this is not to say that economics did not influence the development of antitrust policy. On the contrary, the significant changes in antitrust enforcement of the past quarter of a century have been informed by and even driven by contemporary economic analysis (Williamson, 1987: 301).

Again, most important innovations in social policy, such as social insurance, were adopted with hardly any inputs from economists or other social scientists. In the case of British social policy, for example, Jose Harris has shown that information about the impact of statutory minimum wages upon employment and price levels only became available _after_ the introduction of the Trade Board Act of 1909. Similarly, statistical data were almost wholly lacking before a system of unemployment insurance -- one of the most important innovations of the period -- came into operation in 1912. In both cases, economic information and analysis was a consequence rather than a cause of policy innovation (Harris, 1990: 389-90).

A generation later, the style of policy discourse had changed considerably. The Beveridge Plan of 1942 was supported and illustrated by an impressive array of statistics and expert opinions. Yet, Harris writes, "archive sources make it clear that the structure of Beveridge's scheme was fully worked out before a single item of evidence was gathered. Number-crunching and expert opinion performed an important political and rhetorical function in enhancing the plan's attractiveness and plausibility, but it would be quite wrong to suggest that they determined its fundamental shape" (ib.: 391).

In America, economists began developing a substantial amount of fundamental analyses of social security only in the 1960s -- some thirty years after the creation of the system. Economists writing on social security before the 1960s either were outside the mainstream of their discipline or their interest was really directed at different, broader issues -- keynesian economists, for instance, who thought of social security primarily as an instrument of fiscal policy. Social security executives and their supporters in Congress could easily disregard criticisms from individual experts who lacked widespread professional support (Derthick, 1979). All this has changed with the recurrent financial crises of recent years. These crises and a changing climate of opinion about the proper role of government in the economy, have stimulated a much more sustained intellectual effort by economists and other analysts to develop more or less radical proposals for reform of the present system.

These examples flatly contradict a positivistic or instrumental view of the role of knowledge in politics. They show no "Eureka effect" in the discovery and application of social scientific theories (Harris, 1990: 394), but a slow and complex process of reciprocal influence of ideas and events. The examples also show that in societies that regularly require reasons to be given for public actions and possess forums and procedures for assessing those reasons, ideas can play a key role in policy development even when they do not influence policy initiation.

Social scientists lag behind other scholars in their understanding of the subtle ways in which ideas and events interact. For example, legal scholars recognize that a legal system includes not only legal institutions, legal rules and legal decisions, but also what lawmakers, judges and scholars say about the law. They are also aware that the relationship between legal institutions and legal theory is a dialectic one: the theory describes and evaluates those institutions, but at the same time those institutions, which would otherwise be disconnected and unorganized, become conceptualized and systematized, and hence transformed, by legal argument. As Harold Berman (1983: 8) writes, the law contains within itself a "meta-law" by which it can be both analyzed and evaluated. In this way legal argument is seen as a constituent element of the legal process itself and the development of legal institutions is not artificially separated from the development of ideas and theories about these institutions.

Similarly, I have argued (Majone 1989a) that a full account of policy development must also include the "metapolicy" by which the process is analyzed and evaluated. The contents of the metapolicy -- conceptualizations, theories, arguments, norms -- emerge from and develop along with the practical and professional activities in which policy makers, administrators, judges, experts and advocates engage. Policy development is always accompanied by a parallel process of conceptual development. We miss a great deal if we try to understand policy making solely in terms of power and interests, to the exclusion of debate and argument.

Normative Theory as Positive Theory

The fact that ideas, policies and institutions are interdependent also explains why in practice it is so difficult to neatly separate normative from positive analysis in the study of policy making. Consider, for example, how the two approaches have been used in the analysis of regulatory policy making.

The traditional "public interest" theory of regulation regards market failure as the main justification or motivating reason for introducing public regulation. This theory, which stems from the welfare economics of Pareto and Pigou, is normative in more than one sense. First, the theory demonstrates how, under suitable hypotheses, social welfare may be increased by reducing the gap between private and social costs. Second, the theory is based on the Paretian value judgement that social welfare is an increasing function of individuals' utilities. Finally, the theory rests on the ideological assumption that the market works under normal circumstances, so that state intervention is justified only when it leads to a net increase in social welfare. In other words, the theory views the market as a beneficent institution needing protection as much as control. The significance of these normative assumptions can be seen from the fact that in Europe, where until recently the market did not have the same widespread support it always enjoyed in America, nationalization (of railways, public utilities, banks and so on) rather than American-style regulation became the preferred form of public intervention (Majone 1989b).

Despite these strong normative overtones, the public interest theory can also function as a positive theory of regulation. For example, it suggests the hypothesis that regulators seek, to the best of their ability, to pursue the public interest as defined by their enabling statutes. Because of this dual character, Joskow and Noll (1981) speak of "normative analysis as positive theory". As a positive theory of regulation, however, the public-interest theory seems to be refuted in a number of cases. Even before Stigler's path-breaking article on the economic theory of regulation (Stigler, 1971), political scientists and economists had pointed out that the natural-monopoly rationale for entry and rate regulation did not seem readily applicable to such industries as truck, rail and air transportation. In these and other cases, regulators had made decisions that, by raising prices and reducing the number of competitors, actually reduced social welfare. By contrast, regulation did not change prices in natural monopoly industries where, according to the public-interest theory, it should have eliminated or reduced monopoly power. Stigler (1971:3) concluded that "regulation is acquired by the industry and is designed and operated primarily for its benefits. Stigler's positive theory of regulation assumes that regulators are self-interested normative (positive) PUBLIC INTEREST THEORY | allocative efficiency (correction of market failure) | redistribution zero-sum games POSITIVE (ECONOMIC) THEORY OF REGULATION

maximizers. What matters to each participant in the regulatory game is their wealth or utility, not the aggregate social wealth. Consequently, the real purpose of regulation is distribution rather than the gains in allocative efficiency that would result from the correction of market failures.

Despite the academic popularity of the positive, causal theory, it soon became clear that its predictive power, too, was rather limited. We have already noted that important areas of regulation like antitrust, environmental and consumer protection, or occupational health and safety can hardly be said to be designed and operated primarily for the benefit of producers. An even more serious difficulty for the theory is its failure to provide a satisfactory explanation of why rate or entry regulation is comparatively rare. Most competitive industries are not, in fact, subject to such regulation, even though the producers should find regulation in their interest. As Lindblom has so often argued, in market economies business is as a rule much more influential and better organized than consumer or labor groups. Hence regulation which generates rents for producers should be the rule rather than the exception.

Noting these failures of the economic theory of regulation, Peltzman (1989: 17) has observed that "[i]f there is an empirical basis for the normative theory's continuing attraction for economists, it is probably its apparent success as a theory of regulatory origin. The correspondence between the normative theory and the real-world allocation of regulatory effort seems striking".

Peltzman has also made a careful comparison of the normative and positive theory as theories of regulatory change. According to him, the positive theory can give a reasonably coherent account of deregulation in cases like railroads, airlines and bank deposits, but fails to explain the deregulation of important industries such as trucking and long-distance telecommunications. In these cases, as Temin (1987) and Derthick and Quirk (1985) have also concluded, the normative theory provides a much more plausible explanation of policy change.

I have contrasted the normative and the positive theories of regulation in order to show that even by the criterion of success accepted by positivists -- predictive power -- the former is not necessarily weaker than the latter. One could conclude again, as in the preceding discussion of reasons and causes, that any satisfactory theory of policy change should include both normative and positive elements. But this statement should not be interpreted in the sense that such a theory would be composed of two distinct elements. Rather, the difficulty of proving the superiority of one or the other approach suggests that the normative-positive distinction is rather arbitrary. The label "normative analysis as positive theory" applies not only to public-interest theories of regulation, but to many other theories of social science like Ricardo's theory of international trade, the neoclassical marginal productivity theory of distribution, the theory of separation of powers, or the liberal theory of the state. Such theories tend to mesh description and evaluation and respect neither the distinction between the order of ideas and the order of events nor that between logical analysis and causal explanation (Unger, 1975: 108-12). These distinctions are the very heart of positivistic social science, which is the reason why many social scientists tend to discount the influence of ideas on human affairs as merely instrumental at best.

The thrust of the argument presented in this paper is certainly consistent with some of the main themes of Lindblom's work: the role of ideas and of "usable" knowledge in a probing society; the complexity of the interplay between professional prober and client or public; the importance of mutual adjustment and the centrality of two-way discussion and persuasion to democracy. If the argument had any claim to originality, it is only in the sense of making explicit ideas which one can find, more or less implicit, in many contributions of our author; and of providing additional evidence for the validity of those ideas.

I find it more difficult to share Lindblom's rather gloomy views concerning the social impairment of probing. Several examples of far-reaching changes in policies and institutions have been mentioned in the preceding pages. Such changes have been made possible not only by critical analyses of social scientists and other intellectuals, but also by new beliefs and volitions, and widespread dissatisfaction with the solutions of the past. Much more dramatic changes -- in fact, revolutions in thinking -- have taken place during the last years in many parts of the world: the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the end of socialism in Western Europe; the development of an integrated European Community; the emergence of democratic regimes in parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America; the end of apartheid; the rethinking of the role of the state in developing countries.

Each of these developments is a challenge to basic and long-held beliefs concerning historical determinism, national sovereignty, racial inequality or the superior efficiency of centralized decision making. Moreover, many of these changes have taken place against what appeared to be overwhelming odds. This suggests that at least at some moments in history, thinking about social and political problems is not as obstructed or impaired as Lindblom argues. The challenge for social scientists is to understand under which conditions social learning and new ways of thinking become possible.

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